

Earth Sciences: Instrumentation and Facilities (EAR/IF)

Program Solicitation

NSF 05-587

Replaces Document NSF 04-507



National Science Foundation

Directorate for Geosciences

Division of Earth Sciences

Full Proposal Target Date(s):

August 8, annually

Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment; Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software; Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities; and Support of Research Technicians

February 8, annually

Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities; Support of Research Technicians; and Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)

REVISIONS AND UPDATES

In furtherance of the President's Management Agenda, in Fiscal Year 2005, NSF has identified 23 programs that will offer proposers the option to utilize Grants.gov to prepare and submit proposals. Grants.gov provides a single Government-wide portal for finding and applying for Federal grants online.

Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or via the NSF [FastLane](#) system.

In determining which method to utilize in the electronic preparation and submission of the proposal, please note the following:

- A. Collaborative Proposals. All collaborative proposals must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system. This includes collaborative proposals submitted:
- by one organization (and which include one or more subawards); or
 - as separate submissions from multiple organizations.

Proposers are advised that collaborative proposals submitted in response to this Program Solicitation via Grants.gov will be requested to be withdrawn and proposers will need to resubmit these proposals via FastLane. (Chapter II, Section D.3 of the Grant Proposal Guide provides additional information on collaborative proposals.)

- B. All Other Types of Proposals That Contain Subawards. All other types of proposals that contain one or more subawards also must be submitted via the NSF FastLane system.

The following Revisions and Updates were included in the original program solicitation NSF 05-587:

This solicitation supersedes [NSF 04-507](#). Major changes include: 1) cost-sharing is no longer required; 2) service contracts will no longer be allowed within budgets for **acquisition or upgrade of research equipment** proposals; 3) proposals for the **development of cyberinfrastructure for the Earth sciences (Geoinformatics)** will now be accepted; 4) the target dates

have been changed; and 5) the maximum annual budget for **support of research technicians** submitted to this solicitation has been raised to \$80,000.

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

General Information

Program Title:

Earth Sciences: Instrumentation and Facilities (EAR/IF)

Synopsis of Program:

The Instrumentation and Facilities Program in the Division of Earth Sciences (EAR/IF) supports meritorious requests within and across Earth science disciplines. EAR/IF will consider proposals for:

1. **Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment** that will advance laboratory and field investigations, and student training opportunities in the Earth sciences;
2. **Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software** that will extend current research and research training capabilities in the Earth sciences;
3. **Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities** that will make complex and expensive instruments or systems of instruments broadly available to the Earth sciences research and student communities;
4. **Support of Research Technicians** who will provide for optimal and efficient operation of advanced instrumentation, analytical protocol development, and user training for Earth science research instrumentation;
5. **Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)** that will enable transformative advances in Earth science research and education through novel application, development or adaptation of information technologies.

Planned research uses of requested instruments must include basic research on solid-Earth and surface-Earth processes.

Support is available through grants or cooperative agreements awarded in response to investigator-initiated proposals. Human resource development and education are expected to be an integral part of all proposals submitted to EAR/IF. Proposals requesting equipment, infrastructure or personnel that will serve disciplines outside the Earth sciences may be jointly reviewed with other programs within the Foundation. EAR/IF will consider co-funding of projects with other NSF programs.

Cognizant Program Officer(s):

- David Lambert, Program Director, Directorate for Geosciences, Division of Earth Sciences, 785 S, telephone: (703) 292-8558, email: dlambert@nsf.gov
- Russell C. Kelz, Program Director, Directorate for Geosciences, Division of Earth Sciences, 785 S, telephone: (703) 292-4747, fax: (703) 292-9025, email: rkelz@nsf.gov

Applicable Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number(s):

- 47.050 --- Geosciences

Eligibility Information

- **Organization Limit:** None Specified.

- **PI Eligibility Limit:** None Specified.
- **Limit on Number of Proposals:** None Specified.

Award Information

- **Anticipated Type of Award:** Standard or Continuing Grant or Cooperative Agreement
- **Estimated Number of Awards:** 50 to 60
- **Anticipated Funding Amount:** \$7,000,000 for new awards annually, pending availability of funds

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

- Full proposals submitted via FastLane:
 - Grant Proposal Guide (GPG) Guidelines apply
- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov:
 - NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov Guidelines apply (Note: The NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/grantsgovguide.pdf>) To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package: click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov website, then click on the **Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions** link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button.

Please note that this solicitation includes supplemental proposal preparation instructions that apply to all proposals submitted to the EAR/IF program.

B. Budgetary Information

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Cost Sharing is not required by NSF.
- **Indirect Cost (F&A) Limitations:** Not Applicable.
- **Other Budgetary Limitations:** Not Applicable.

C. Due Dates

- **Full Proposal Target Date(s):**
 - August 8, annually
 - Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment; Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software; Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities; and Support of Research Technicians
 - February 8, annually
 - Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities; Support of Research Technicians; and Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)

Proposal Review Information

- **Merit Review Criteria:** National Science Board approved criteria. Additional merit review considerations apply. Please see the full text of this solicitation for further information.

Award Administration Information

- **Award Conditions:** Standard NSF award conditions apply.
- **Reporting Requirements:** Standard NSF reporting requirements apply.

Summary of Program Requirements

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Division of Earth Sciences (EAR) supports meritorious proposals for research focused on improving the understanding of the structure, composition, and evolution of the Earth and the processes that govern the formation and behavior of the Earth's materials. The results of Earth Science research contribute to a better understanding of the Earth's changing environments, the natural distribution of its mineral, water, and energy resources, and provide methods for predicting and mitigating the effects of geologic hazards such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, and landslides. EAR's research programs support studies of the earth's interior and terrestrial surface, including freshwater systems and interactions with the biosphere and atmosphere. Detailed descriptions of research programs within EAR are available in the latest Earth Science Research Program Solicitation at:

<http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?org=EAR>

The Instrumentation and Facilities Program in the Division of Earth Sciences (EAR/IF) supports meritorious proposals for:

1. ***Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment;***
2. ***Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software;***
3. ***Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities;***
4. ***Support of Research Technicians;***
5. ***Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics).***

In all proposals, a common goal should be to advance research and research training in the Earth sciences.

Investigators interested in a recent history of EAR/IF awards and in learning more about supported national or regional multi-

user facilities are encouraged to browse the EAR/IF homepage at:

<http://www.nsf.gov/geo/ear/if/facil.jsp>

II. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Instrumentation and Facilities Program in the Division of Earth Sciences (EAR/IF) supports meritorious requests within and across Earth science disciplines. EAR/IF will consider proposals for:

1. **Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment** that will advance laboratory and field investigations, and student training opportunities in the Earth sciences;
2. **Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software** that will extend current research and research training capabilities in the Earth sciences;
3. **Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities** that will make complex and expensive instruments or systems of instruments broadly available to the Earth sciences research and student communities;
4. **Support of Research Technicians** who will provide for optimal and efficient operation of advanced instrumentation, analytical protocol development, and user training for Earth science research instrumentation;
5. **Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)** that will enable transformative advances in Earth science research and education through novel application, development or adaptation of information technologies.

Planned research uses of requested instruments must include basic research on solid-Earth and surface-Earth processes.

Support is available through grants or cooperative agreements awarded in response to investigator-initiated proposals. Human resource development and education are expected to be an integral part of all proposals submitted to EAR/IF. Proposals requesting equipment, infrastructure or personnel that will serve disciplines outside the Earth sciences may be jointly reviewed with other programs within the Foundation. EAR/IF will consider co-funding of projects with other NSF programs.

EAR/IF submission is appropriate for proposals that include equipment only. However, equipment needs that are linked to the conduct of a specific research project being proposed to NSF/EAR may be included within the budget of a proposal submitted to an appropriate EAR research program. Examples might include environmental sensors or observational field equipment that will be installed *in situ*, equipment that could be considered expendable, individual desktop or laptop personal computers, analytical balances, or miscellaneous sample preparation equipment. Investigators planning on submitting an EAR research proposal with a significant equipment budget are encouraged to discuss these plans with the relevant research program officer prior to submission.

There is no upper budgetary limit on proposals submitted directly to EAR/IF.

Proposal Categories

Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment

EAR/IF accepts proposals seeking support for the acquisition of new research equipment or the upgrade of existing equipment; **such proposals may only be submitted to the August 8 target date.**

Analytical laboratory and field instrumentation and computational equipment often serve a range of scientific disciplines. Documentation of planned interdisciplinary uses of requested equipment is encouraged. EAR/IF will assess the level of financial support appropriate for awards and may seek to partner with other appropriate NSF programs.

The ability of organizations to maintain, operate and provide technical support for sophisticated analytical equipment during its expected lifetime will be a review criterion. Management plans for oversight, user access policies and anticipated user fees, if any, should be included in proposals.

Investigators interested in seeking NSF support for the acquisition or upgrade of research equipment might also wish to investigate the Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program. MRI maintains a January submission deadline each year and the goals and design of the MRI Program complement those of the EAR/IF Program. Investigators are encouraged to examine the latest MRI solicitation (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/>).

Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software

EAR/IF accepts proposals seeking support for the development of new instrumentation, analytical techniques or software that extend current research capabilities in the Earth sciences; **such proposals may only be submitted to the August 8 target date.**

Investigators seeking to develop new instrumentation, analytical techniques or software should demonstrate that a community of geoscientists is actively interested in the new capability. EAR/IF expects that design details and/or schematics for developed research instrumentation and protocols for new analytical techniques will be published and are not proprietary. EAR/IF expects that developed software will be open source and available for download via the Web or through distribution on appropriate media at no cost beyond that reasonable for duplication, media and shipping costs. EAR/IF will consider support of development projects that are collaborative between academic and industrial partners. EAR/IF does not typically support the sole commercial development of instrumentation or capabilities.

Investigators interested in seeking NSF support for the development of new research instrumentation might also wish to investigate the Major Research Instrumentation (MRI) Program. MRI maintains a January submission deadline each year and the goals and design of the MRI Program complement those of the EAR/IF Program. Investigators are encouraged to examine the latest MRI solicitation (<http://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/programs/mri/>).

Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities

EAR/IF accepts proposals seeking support for national or regional multi-user facilities; **such proposals may be submitted to either the February 8 or the August 8 target date.**

Investigators seeking to establish or continue support of a national or regional multi-user facility are encouraged to contact an EAR/IF Program Officer prior to submission. In general, support for national or regional multi-user facilities is reserved for groups that seek to offer expensive or specialized analytical laboratory or field equipment and services to the broader geosciences community. Typically, EAR/IF looks for specialized leadership capabilities and the availability of adequate and appropriate supporting infrastructure and personnel.

Support of Research Technicians

EAR/IF accepts proposals seeking support for research technicians; **such proposals may be submitted to either the February 8 or the August 8 target date.**

Investigators seeking support for research technicians may request a maximum of \$80,000 per year over a maximum three year period for the technician's salary, fringe benefits and related indirect costs. EAR/IF seeks to establish new full-time technical positions that will serve geoscience research programs. EAR/IF will not review proposals requesting support for existing technical staff or positions previously supported through this program. Organizations considering submission of a proposal requesting support for a research technician are advised that such support is typically limited to U.S. academic institutions.

Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)

EAR/IF accepts proposals seeking support to develop cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics); **such proposals may only be submitted to the February 8 target date.**

Geoinformatics proposals should describe the development of enabling information technology platform(s) intended to facilitate the next generation of Earth science research. EAR/IF seeks proposed platform activities that are transformative, with impacts that extend beyond an individual investigator or small group of investigators. EAR/IF will accept Geoinformatics proposals seeking support for the development and implementation of databases, networks, information technology facilities, new information technology instrumentation, techniques, and methodologies that support the enhancement of Earth sciences research activities. EAR/IF is particularly interested in proposals that address priorities identified by the research and education communities in community workshop reports on science and cyberinfrastructure needs in the Earth sciences.

EAR/IF expects that Geoinformatics proposals will:

1. demonstrate an awareness of existing geoscience information technology infrastructure and developments,
2. where appropriate, present plans for integration and compatibility of proposed information technology platform(s) within the network of existing geoscience information technology infrastructure,
3. adopt open source and platform independent development principles,
4. address scalability,
5. involve computational scientists as co-investigators, collaborators, or consultants.

In addition to contacting an EAR/IF Program Officer, prospective principal investigators are encouraged to contact the Program Officer(s) in the core science program(s) most closely affiliated with the proposed Geoinformatics activity. This reflects the likelihood that the submitted proposal will be co-reviewed by EAR/IF and the appropriate core science program.

Proposals submitted solely for the acquisition of computer hardware should follow guidelines detailed under *Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment*.

Proposals submitted solely for the development of instrument control or data acquisition, analysis or modeling software should follow guidelines detailed under *Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software*.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

The categories of proposers identified in the [Grant Proposal Guide](#) are eligible to submit proposals under this program announcement/solicitation.

IV. AWARD INFORMATION

Approximately \$7,000,000 annually for 50-60 new awards, subject to the availability of funds. Awards may be standard or continuing grants or cooperative agreements.

V. PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Proposal Preparation Instructions

Proposers may opt to submit proposals in response to this Program Solicitation via [Grants.gov](#) or via the NSF [FastLane](#) system.

- Full proposals submitted via FastLane:

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via the NSF FastLane System should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the general guidelines contained in the NSF *Grant Proposal Guide* (GPG). The complete text of the GPG is available electronically on the NSF Website at: <http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?gpg>. Paper copies of the GPG may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from pubs@nsf.gov.

Proposers are reminded to identify the program announcement/solicitation number (05-587) in the program announcement/solicitation block on the NSF *Cover Sheet For Proposal to the National Science Foundation*. Compliance with this requirement is critical to determining the relevant proposal processing guidelines. Failure to submit this information may delay processing.

- Full proposals submitted via Grants.gov:

Proposals submitted in response to this program solicitation via Grants.gov should be prepared and submitted in accordance with the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for the Preparation and Submission of NSF Applications via Grants.gov. The complete text of the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide is available on the Grants.gov website and on the NSF website at: <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/docs/grantsgovguide.pdf>) To obtain copies of the Application Guide and Application Forms Package, click on the Apply tab on the Grants.gov site, then click on the **Apply Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Application Instructions** link and enter the funding opportunity number, (the program solicitation number without the NSF prefix) and press the Download Package button. Paper copies of the Grants.gov Application Guide also may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from pubs@nsf.gov.

- Supplemental Proposal Preparation Instructions For Use Whether Submitting via either Fastlane or Grants.gov:

Special attention should be paid to the following items when submitting a proposal to EAR/IF:

1. Title

The title of the proposal should convey its main topic. Proposals for ***acquisition or upgrade of research equipment, development of new instrumentation, analytical techniques or software, support of national or regional multi-user facilities, support of research technicians, and development of cyberinfrastructure for the Earth sciences (Geoinformatics)*** should, respectively, have titles beginning with:

"Acquisition of ..."

"Upgrade of ..."

"Development of ..."

"Facility Support: ..."

"Technician Support: ..."

"Geoinformatics: ..."

2. Project Description

Proposals for ***acquisition or upgrade of research equipment*** must include a description of the research projects of the principal investigator(s) and other non-casual users for which the equipment will be used. The description of the research projects and the equipment should be comprehensive enough to allow reviewers to evaluate the merit of the research and the extent to which the equipment is essential and appropriate.

Proposals for ***development of new instrumentation, analytical techniques or software*** must include a description of the instrument design, technique or code development that is sufficiently detailed for reviewers to evaluate its technical capabilities and potential benefit to research in the Earth sciences.

Proposals for ***support of national or regional multi-user facilities*** must include a description of the technical capabilities of the facility and the impact that these capabilities will make on the science. The size and nature of the science community that will make principal use of the facility should also be described, along with any evidence of that community's desire to pool resources in support of the facility.

Proposals for **support of research technicians** must include a description of the laboratory and/or field responsibilities that will be assumed by the technician. The description should be detailed enough so that reviewers can evaluate the extent of the technician's contribution to the research and user training of an individual principal investigator, group of investigators, or a department-wide research program, and their students.

Proposals for **development of cyberinfrastructure for the Earth sciences** (Geoinformatics) must demonstrate that a community of Earth scientists is actively interested in and will utilize the new capability. Investigators should also demonstrate how Geoinformatics platforms will contribute to advancing research, education and diversity in the Earth sciences. Investigators should consider the degree to which the proposed development is integrated, or can be easily integrated, in larger existing community information infrastructure (network) for the Earth sciences and beyond, and the breadth of the proposed facility's or project's impact on the Earth science community.

3. Maintenance and Operation

Proposals for **acquisition or upgrade of research equipment or support of national or regional multi-user facilities** must include a section describing the provisions for their maintenance and operation. The qualifications of persons immediately in charge and the source of funds to meet the cost of maintenance and operations should be given. If user fees are involved, a description of how they will be assessed should be included. A management plan should be included that describes access policies, scheduling and prioritization, and oversight and/or governance.

4. Inventory of Existing Equipment and Technician Positions

Proposals for **acquisition or upgrade of research equipment** must list all comparable items of equipment to which the applicants have access at the submitting organization or elsewhere.

Proposals for **support of research technicians** must include a short description of all existing technician positions in the submitting department and their source of funding. Proposals should make it clear that the request is for support of a new full-time technical position.

B. Budgetary Information

Cost Sharing:

Cost sharing is not required by NSF in proposals submitted under this Program Solicitation.

Budget Preparation Instructions:

The budget section of proposals for *acquisition or upgrade of research equipment* should indicate the current price and any discounts available for the total equipment package requested, itemized by major components. Relevant manufacturers quotes should be included in the supplementary documents section of the proposal. **Inclusion of fees for service contracts is no longer allowed.**

Personnel costs directly attributable to *development of new instrumentation, analytical techniques or software*, to *support of national or regional multi-user facilities*, or to *development of cyberinfrastructure for the Earth sciences (Geoinformatics)*, may be requested. Personnel costs are not ordinarily supported through grants for *acquisition or upgrade of research equipment*. Exceptions may include the establishment of new laboratories by early-career investigators. PI's are advised to contact an EAR/IF Program Officer before including salary support in any *acquisition or upgrade of research equipment* proposal.

Proposals for *support of research technicians* may request a maximum of \$80,000/year for a maximum of three years.

C. Due Dates

Proposals must be submitted by the following date(s):

Full Proposal Target Date(s):

August 8, annually

Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Acquisition or Upgrade of Research Equipment; Development of New Instrumentation, Analytical Techniques or Software; Support of National or Regional Multi-User

February 8, annually

Proposals may ONLY be submitted for: Support of National or Regional Multi-User Facilities; Support of Research Technicians; and Development of Cyberinfrastructure for the Earth Sciences (Geoinformatics)

D. FastLane/Grants.gov Requirements

- For proposals submitted via FastLane:

Detailed technical instructions for proposal preparation and submission via FastLane are available at: <https://www.fastlane.nsf.gov/a1/newstan.htm>. For FastLane user support, call the FastLane Help Desk at 1-800-673-6188 or e-mail fastlane@nsf.gov. The FastLane Help Desk answers general technical questions related to the use of the FastLane system. Specific questions related to this program announcement/solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this announcement/solicitation.

Submission of Electronically Signed Cover Sheets. The Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must electronically sign the proposal Cover Sheet to submit the required proposal certifications (see Chapter II, Section C of the [Grant Proposal Guide](#) for a listing of the certifications). The AOR must provide the required electronic certifications within five working days following the electronic submission of the proposal. Proposers are no longer required to provide a paper copy of the signed Proposal Cover Sheet to NSF. Further instructions regarding this process are available on the FastLane Website at: <http://www.fastlane.nsf.gov>

- For proposals submitted via Grants.gov:

Before using Grants.gov for the first time, each organization must register to create an institutional profile. Once registered, the applicant's organization can then apply for any federal grant on the Grants.gov website.

The Grants.gov's Grant Community User Guide is a comprehensive reference document that provides technical information about Grants.gov. Proposers can download the User Guide as a Microsoft Word document or as a PDF document. The Grants.gov User Guide is available at: <http://www.grants.gov/CustomerSupport>. In addition, the NSF Grants.gov Application Guide provides additional technical guidance regarding preparation of proposals via Grants.gov. For Grants.gov user support, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or by email: support@grants.gov. The Grants.gov Contact Center answers general technical questions related to the use of Grants.gov. Specific questions related to this program solicitation should be referred to the NSF program staff contact(s) listed in Section VIII of this solicitation.

Submitting the Proposal. Once all documents have been completed, the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) must submit the application to Grants.gov and verify the desired funding opportunity and agency to which the application is submitted. The AOR must then sign and submit the application to Grants.gov. The completed application will be transferred to the NSF FastLane system for further processing.

VI. PROPOSAL REVIEW INFORMATION

A. NSF Proposal Review Process

Reviews of proposals submitted to NSF are solicited from peers with expertise in the substantive area of the proposed research or education project. These reviewers are selected by Program Officers charged with the oversight of the review process. NSF invites the proposer to suggest, at the time of submission, the names of appropriate or inappropriate reviewers. Care is taken to ensure that reviewers have no conflicts with the proposer. Special efforts are made to recruit reviewers from non-academic institutions, minority-serving institutions, or adjacent disciplines to that principally addressed in the proposal.

The National Science Board approved revised criteria for evaluating proposals at its meeting on March 28, 1997 ([NSB 97-72](#)). All NSF proposals are evaluated through use of the two merit review criteria. In some instances, however, NSF will employ additional criteria as required to highlight the specific objectives of certain programs and activities.

On July 8, 2002, the NSF Director issued [Important Notice 127](#), Implementation of new Grant Proposal Guide Requirements Related to the Broader Impacts Criterion. This Important Notice reinforces the importance of addressing both criteria in the preparation and review of all proposals submitted to NSF. NSF continues to strengthen its internal processes to ensure that both of the merit review criteria are addressed when making funding decisions.

In an effort to increase compliance with these requirements, the January 2002 issuance of the GPG incorporated revised proposal preparation guidelines relating to the development of the Project Summary and Project Description. Chapter II of the GPG specifies that Principal Investigators (PIs) must address both merit review criteria in separate statements within the one-page Project Summary. This chapter also reiterates that broader impacts resulting from the proposed project must be addressed in the Project Description and described as an integral part of the narrative.

Effective October 1, 2002, NSF will return without review proposals that do not separately address both merit review criteria within the Project Summary. It is believed that these changes to NSF proposal preparation and processing guidelines will more clearly articulate the importance of broader impacts to NSF-funded projects.

The two National Science Board approved merit review criteria are listed below (see the [Grant Proposal Guide](#) Chapter III.A for further information). The criteria include considerations that help define them. These considerations are suggestions and not all will apply to any given proposal. While proposers must address both merit review criteria, reviewers will be asked to address only those considerations that are relevant to the proposal being considered and for which he/she is qualified to make judgments.

What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?

How important is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of the prior work.) To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative and original concepts? How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity? Is there sufficient access to resources?

What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?

How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning? How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)? To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding? What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

NSF staff will give careful consideration to the following in making funding decisions:

Integration of Research and Education

One of the principal strategies in support of NSF's goals is to foster integration of research and education through the programs, projects, and activities it supports at academic and research institutions. These institutions provide abundant opportunities where individuals may concurrently assume responsibilities as researchers, educators, and students and where all can engage in joint efforts that infuse education with the excitement of discovery and enrich research through the diversity of learning perspectives.

Integrating Diversity into NSF Programs, Projects, and Activities

Broadening opportunities and enabling the participation of all citizens -- women and men, underrepresented minorities, and persons with disabilities -- is essential to the health and vitality of science and engineering. NSF is committed to this principle of diversity and deems it central to the programs, projects, and activities it considers and supports.

Additional Review Criteria:

In addition to the general NSF merit review criteria (intellectual merit/broader impacts), criteria considered in the evaluation of **all** proposals submitted to EAR/IF include:

- the intrinsic merit of the research that will benefit from the equipment, technique or software, multi-user facility, technician, or Geoinformatics platform;
- the number of investigators who will substantially benefit from the equipment, technique or software, multi-user facility, technician, or Geoinformatics platform and the strength of their research programs;
- the degree to which the equipment, technique or software, multi-user facility, technician, or Geoinformatics platform is appropriate and essential for the intended research.

An additional criterion considered in the evaluation of proposals submitted to EAR/IF for **acquisition or upgrade of research equipment** includes:

- the ability to operate and maintain complex equipment during its expected lifetime.

An additional criterion considered in the evaluation of proposals submitted to EAR/IF for **support of national or regional multi-user facilities** and **development of cyberinfrastructure for the Earth sciences (Geoinformatics)** includes:

- the ability to provide access to a facility or information system intended to serve a national or regional research community.

B. Review Protocol and Associated Customer Service Standard

All proposals are carefully reviewed by at least three other persons outside NSF who are experts in the particular field represented by the proposal. Proposals submitted in response to this announcement/solicitation will be reviewed by Ad Hoc and/or panel review.

Reviewers will be asked to formulate a recommendation to either support or decline each proposal. The Program Officer assigned to manage the proposal's review will consider the advice of reviewers and will formulate a recommendation.

A summary rating and accompanying narrative will be completed and submitted by each reviewer. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Verbatim copies of reviews, excluding the names of the reviewers, are sent to the Principal Investigator/Project Director by the Program Director. In addition, the proposer will receive an explanation of the decision to award or decline funding.

NSF is striving to be able to tell proposers whether their proposals have been declined or recommended for funding within six months. The time interval begins on the closing date of an announcement/solicitation, or the date of proposal receipt, whichever is later. The interval ends when the Division Director accepts the Program Officer's recommendation.

In all cases, after programmatic approval has been obtained, the proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Division of Grants and Agreements for review of business, financial, and policy implications and the processing and issuance of a grant or other agreement. Proposers are cautioned that only a Grants and Agreements Officer may make commitments, obligations or awards on behalf of NSF or authorize the expenditure of funds. No commitment on the part of NSF should be inferred from technical or budgetary discussions with a NSF Program Officer. A Principal Investigator or organization that makes financial or personnel commitments in the absence of a grant or cooperative agreement signed by the NSF Grants and Agreements Officer does so at their own risk.

VII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Notification of the Award

Notification of the award is made to *the submitting organization* by a Grants Officer in the Division of Grants and Agreements. Organizations whose proposals are declined will be advised as promptly as possible by the cognizant NSF Program Division administering the program. Verbatim copies of reviews, not including the identity of the reviewer, will be provided automatically to the Principal Investigator. (See section VI.A. for additional information on the review process.)

B. Award Conditions

An NSF award consists of: (1) the award letter, which includes any special provisions applicable to the award and any numbered amendments thereto; (2) the budget, which indicates the amounts, by categories of expense, on which NSF has based its support (or otherwise communicates any specific approvals or disapprovals of proposed expenditures); (3) the proposal referenced in the award letter; (4) the applicable award conditions, such as Grant General Conditions (NSF-GC-1); * or Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Terms and Conditions * and (5) any announcement or other NSF issuance that may be incorporated by reference in the award letter. Cooperative agreement awards are administered in accordance with NSF Cooperative Agreement Financial and Administrative Terms and Conditions (CA-FATC). Electronic mail notification is the preferred way to transmit NSF awards to organizations that have electronic mail capabilities and have requested such notification from the Division of Grants and Agreements.

*These documents may be accessed electronically on NSF's Website at <http://www.nsf.gov/awards/managing/>. Paper copies

of these documents may be obtained from the NSF Publications Clearinghouse, telephone (703) 292-7827 or by e-mail from pubs@nsf.gov.

More comprehensive information on NSF Award Conditions is contained in the NSF *Grant Policy Manual* (GPM) Chapter II, available electronically on the NSF Website at http://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=gpm. The GPM is also for sale through the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office (GPO), Washington, DC 20402. The telephone number at GPO for subscription information is (202) 512-1800. The GPM may be ordered through the GPO Website at <http://www.gpo.gov>.

C. Reporting Requirements

For all multi-year grants (including both standard and continuing grants), the PI must submit an annual project report to the cognizant Program Officer at least 90 days before the end of the current budget period.

Within 90 days after the expiration of an award, the PI also is required to submit a final project report. Failure to provide final technical reports delays NSF review and processing of pending proposals for the PI and all Co-PIs. PIs should examine the formats of the required reports in advance to assure availability of required data.

PIs are required to use NSF's electronic project reporting system, available through FastLane, for preparation and submission of annual and final project reports. This system permits electronic submission and updating of project reports, including information on project participants (individual and organizational), activities and findings, publications, and other specific products and contributions. PIs will not be required to re-enter information previously provided, either with a proposal or in earlier updates using the electronic system.

VIII. CONTACTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

General inquiries regarding this program should be made to:

- David Lambert, Program Director, Directorate for Geosciences, Division of Earth Sciences, 785 S, telephone: (703) 292-8558, email: dlambert@nsf.gov
- Russell C. Kelz, Program Director, Directorate for Geosciences, Division of Earth Sciences, 785 S, telephone: (703) 292-4747, fax: (703) 292-9025, email: rkelz@nsf.gov

For questions related to the use of FastLane, contact:

- Brian E. Dawson, Information Technology Specialist, Directorate for Geosciences, 705 N, telephone: (703) 292-4727, fax: (703) 292-9042, email: bdawson@nsf.gov

For questions related to the use of Grants.gov contact:

- Grants.gov Contact Center: If the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) has not received a confirmation message from Grants.gov within 48 hours of submission of the application, please contact via telephone: 1-800-518-4726; e-mail: support@grants.gov.

IX. OTHER PROGRAMS OF INTEREST

The NSF *Guide to Programs* is a compilation of funding for research and education in science, mathematics, and engineering. The NSF *Guide to Programs* is available electronically at <http://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/getpub?gp>. General descriptions of NSF programs, research areas, and eligibility information for proposal submission are provided in each chapter.

Many NSF programs offer announcements or solicitations concerning specific proposal requirements. To obtain additional information about these requirements, contact the appropriate NSF program offices. Any changes in NSF's fiscal year programs occurring after press time for the *Guide to Programs* will be announced in the NSF *E-Bulletin*, which is updated daily on the NSF Website at <http://www.nsf.gov/home/ebulletin>, and in individual program announcements/solicitations.

Subscribers can also sign up for NSF's [MyNSF News Service](http://www.nsf.gov/mynsf/) (<http://www.nsf.gov/mynsf/>) to be notified of new funding opportunities that become available.

Related Programs:

- Major Research Instrumentation Program ([NSF 05-515](#))
- Earth Sciences Research at the National Science Foundation ([NSF 04-613](#))

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Facilitation Awards for Scientists and Engineers with Disabilities (FASSED) provide funding for special assistance or equipment to enable persons with disabilities (investigators and other staff, including student research assistants) to work on NSF-supported projects. See the GPG Chapter II, Section D.2 for instructions regarding preparation of these types of proposals.

The National Science Foundation promotes and advances scientific progress in the United States by competitively awarding grants and cooperative agreements for research and education in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering.

To get the latest information about program deadlines, to download copies of NSF publications, and to access abstracts of awards, visit the NSF Website at <http://www.nsf.gov>

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- **For General Information** (NSF Information Center): (703) 292-5111
- **TDD (for the hearing-impaired):** (703) 292-5090
- **To Order Publications or Forms:**
 - Send an e-mail to: pubs@nsf.gov
 - or telephone: (703) 292-7827
- **To Locate NSF Employees:** (703) 292-5111

PRIVACY ACT AND PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENTS

The information requested on proposal forms and project reports is solicited under the authority of the National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended. The information on proposal forms will be used in connection with the selection of qualified proposals; project reports submitted by awardees will be used for program evaluation and reporting within the Executive Branch and to Congress. The information requested may be disclosed to qualified reviewers and staff assistants

as part of the proposal review process; to applicant institutions/grantees to provide or obtain data regarding the proposal review process, award decisions, or the administration of awards; to government contractors, experts, volunteers and researchers and educators as necessary to complete assigned work; to other government agencies needing information as part of the review process or in order to coordinate programs; and to another Federal agency, court or party in a court or Federal administrative proceeding if the government is a party. Information about Principal Investigators may be added to the Reviewer file and used to select potential candidates to serve as peer reviewers or advisory committee members. See Systems of Records, NSF-50, "Principal Investigator/Proposal File and Associated Records," 63 Federal Register 267 (January 5, 1998), and NSF-51, "Reviewer/Proposal File and Associated Records," 63 Federal Register 268 (January 5, 1998). Submission of the information is voluntary. Failure to provide full and complete information, however, may reduce the possibility of receiving an award.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to an information collection unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this collection is 3145-0058. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 120 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions. Send comments regarding this burden estimate and any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: Suzanne Plimpton, Reports Clearance Officer, Division of Administrative Services, National Science Foundation, Arlington, VA 22230.

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